



Directors of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions
5. Reverend John B. Tenny, S.S., 1935-1976

Kevin Abing, 1994

John B. Tenny enjoyed a longer term of service as BCIM director than any of his predecessors. He assumed control of the Bureau from Monsignor Hughes in June 1935 and remained at that post until 1976. The Bureau, as it did under its previous directors, became an extension of Tenny's personality. He was reserved, fastidious, bookish and shy, and the BCIM seemed to take on some of those same qualities. Under Tenny, the Bureau underwent a long period of consolidation or entrenchment. It was no longer the politically and socially active organization it had become under Monsignors Ketcham and Hughes. Rather, the Bureau focused entirely on its educational and missionary functions. Tenny worked tenaciously to keep Catholic schools and missions operating, but toward the end of his tenure, his single-mindedness prevented the BCIM from effectively dealing with the wrenching changes which Native Americans faced.

Moreso than any other director, Tenny's early life is sketchy. He was born in Denver, Colorado, on June 8, 1890 to Robert and Madeleine Tenny. Sometime thereafter, his family moved to Lebanon, Kentucky. Young Benjamin, as he was known, began his seminary studies at the age of twelve at St. Gregory's Seminary in Cincinnati. From there, he studied for one year at the high school at St. Charles College in Catonsville, Maryland. He later studied at St. Francis Seminary in St. Francis, Wisconsin, and at St. Mary's College in St. Mary's, Kansas. After he completed his studies there, Tenny matriculated at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. At St. Mary's, Tenny displayed an exceptional intellectual capacity, being one of a select group at that time in the school's history to receive perfect marks in theology. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1910 and his Master of Arts degree the following year. On June 17, 1913, James Cardinal Gibbons ordained Tenny in Baltimore's Cathedral of the Assumption.¹

Though Tenny was slated to work in the Louisville diocese, the bishop at Louisville permitted the new priest to engage in work for the Sulpician Society. Tenny joined the Society in 1914 and served as an instructor at St. Austin's College in Washington, D.C. This institution was a Sulpician scholasticate and novitiate founded in 1901 to train society members to become professors at Sulpician seminaries and colleges. From 1915 to 1920, Tenny taught Church History, Moral Theology and Scripture at St. Mary's University in Baltimore.² During his stint at St. Mary's, he traveled to Rome to further his studies in theology and scriptures at the College

¹BCIM *Newsletter* (November 1981), BCIM, Series 4/1, Box 14, folder 28; C.D.T.?, June 20, 1935; William J. Lee, S.S., to "Dear Sulpician Confrere," October 19, 1981, Sulpician Archives, Baltimore, Record Group 42, Box 7.

²Lee to "Dear Sulpician Confrere," October 19, 1981. See *The Official Catholic Directory* for the years 1915-1920 to trace Tenny's assignments.

Angelico and received his S.T.D. degree in 1917.³ As he prepared for the return trip to the United States, Tennelly expressed some fear for his own personal safety. World War I was still raging in Europe, causing legitimate concern about his imminent voyage, but he placed his trust in God. In a letter to Father Edward Dyer, Vicar General of the Sulpicians in the U.S., Tennelly wrote:

I suppose that there is little danger and that my voyage will be safe enough. Should anything happen, I trust in the divine Mercy that it will be a better home coming to the true Patria; I shall love to the end God and His Holy Church, the land of my birth and all whom I have loved there. I know that you are all praying for me and that whatever comes will be for the best.⁴

Tennelly returned safely and resumed his duties at St. Mary's until 1920 when he became a professor of Sacred Scripture and Dogmatic Theology at the Sulpician Seminary in Washington. From 1926 to 1932, he served as rector of the Seminary. Afterward, he taught at the Seminary until 1935.⁵

In addition to his teaching assignments at the Seminary, Father Tennelly added the duties of Secretary and Treasurer of the Commission For the Catholic Missions Among the Colored People and the Indians in 1925. The Third Plenary Council established the Commission in 1884 to assist African-American and Native-American missions through a collection taken on the first Sunday in Lent. The Commission acted as an adjunct to the BCIM, for a portion of the money raised by the Commission was funneled through the Bureau to Catholic Indian missions. For years, Father Edward Dyer acted as Commission Secretary and Treasurer, but he decided to turn the reins over to his younger friend and colleague. It seems that this was Father Tennelly's first exposure to missionary work. In his first annual report, Father Tennelly estimated that there were about 250,000 Catholic African-Americans and another 100,000 Catholic Indians in the U.S. The funds raised in the Lenten collection helped finance missions to these groups but also supported the ninety Catholic boarding and day schools among the Indians. Catholic Indian schools seemed to worry Tennelly especially. Their number declined steadily over the years as more and more Indian children attended government schools. In 1930, Tennelly lamented that trend, complaining that government schools provided only a "thin veneer of religious training."⁶

Tennelly became even more intimately connected with the plight of Catholic Indian schools when he was named BCIM director in June 1935. Indeed, he was Monsignor Hughes' hand-picked successor. During Tennelly's ten years as Commission Secretary, he and Hughes became close friends. In the spring of 1935, when Hughes announced his plans to retire, he also pushed for Tennelly to replace him. Hughes explained to the Bureau's board of directors "how during the past ten years I have discussed every Bureau problem with him and invariably profited by his advice." The board took Hughes' counsel to heart. On June 12, 1935, Archbishop Dougherty notified Tennelly that he had been unanimously selected to take over as BCIM director at the end of the month. Tennelly accepted the position reluctantly. He was very happy with his academic position

³BCIM *Newsletter* (November 1981), BCIM, Series 4/1, Box 14, folder 28.

⁴Tennelly to Father Edward Dyer, July 10, 1917, quoted in BCIM *Newsletter* (December 1981), BCIM, Series 4/1, Box 14, folder 28.

⁵Lee to "Dear Sulpician Confrere," October 19, 1981. See also *The Official Catholic Directory* for the years 1921-1935.

⁶*Our Negro and Indian Missions, 1926*, BCIM, Series 7/1, Box 1, folder 1; *Our Negro and Indian Missions, 1930*, BCIM, Series 7/1, Box 1, folder 5, quote on p. 29.

and had serious doubts about his capacity to guide the BCIM. But, he accepted the "laborious position" in deference to the wishes of Cardinal Dougherty.⁷

The new director immediately took steps to sustain the goodwill which Monsignors Ketcham and Hughes had established between the BCIM and the federal government. Shortly before he officially assumed his new post, Tennyly contacted Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier and vowed that he would personally "endeavor to cooperate with the Indian Office to the best of my ability, and hope for a continuance of the present cordial relationship." Tennyly's efforts bore fruit for Catholic Indian missions and schools. In 1937, he happily reported that federal aid for Catholic schools in fiscal year 1938 had increased by \$74,100. As proof of Collier's friendliness, Tennyly noted that President Roosevelt had impounded ten per cent of all Congressional appropriations. Collier and the Secretary of the Interior, however, reduced funding for Catholic schools by only one and one-half percent "as a token of compliance with Presidential Orders." Father Tennyly regarded this as a "considerable favor, for the reduction of 15% which was ordered by the President in the appropriations in the years 1933, 1934 and 1935 was applied to our appropriations during these years."⁸

The amity between the Indian Office and the BCIM continued for many years, but there were other intrusions which greatly affected Native Americans in general and Catholic missions/schools in particular. Hostility toward John Collier and his "Indian New Deal" within Congress and among reform groups had been building for years. Arguments against Collier's Indian policy ranged far and wide. Some opponents believed that the commissioner was trying to promote atheism among the Indians. Others charged that Collier's support of Native communal life was, in fact, thinly-veiled communism. Still others accused Collier of preventing the Indians from joining mainstream society, thereby perpetuating the Indians' wardship status and federal responsibility for them. A combination of New Deal antipathy and Depression-era retrenchment caused Congress to drastically reduce federal expenditures for the Indian Office.⁹ Catholic Indian schools suffered as well. In 1942, the BCIM entered into twenty-two school contracts with the Indian Office totaling \$177,875, a reduction of \$21,375 from the previous year. The following year, government appropriations fell again to \$176,375. Tennyly vigorously lobbied the House Appropriations Committee to save as much as he could because the President's budget called for a decrease of \$39,750. Tennyly could not stop the decline, however. By 1946, the Indian Office concluded twenty contracts with the Bureau for \$152,500.¹⁰

Another event impacting Native Americans was the country's entrance into World War II. During the war years, Tennyly's narrowly-defined role for the Bureau first came into play. During

⁷Monsignor Hughes to Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, April 4, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 232, folder 2; Hughes to Bishop John J. Cantwell, April 13, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 231, folder 16; Dennis Cardinal Dougherty to J.B. Tennyly, June 12, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 232, folder 11; Tennyly to Very Rev. John J. Fenlon, S.S. Prov., June 13, 1935, Sulpician Archives, Baltimore, Record Group 12, Box 6.

⁸Tennyly to John Collier, June 28, 1935, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 232, folder 11; Tennyly to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, November 8, 1937, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 243, folder 8.

⁹Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:993-1005; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 102-105.

¹⁰Tennyly to Most Rev. Francis J. Spellman, October 26, 1942, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 267, folder 17; Tennyly to Cardinal Dougherty, October 25, 1943, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 270, folder 5; Tennyly to Archbishop Michael J. Curley, October 31, 1946, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 279, folder 10.

the war, over twenty thousand Native Americans joined the armed forces. Thousands more supported the war effort by migrating to urban areas and working in defense plants.¹¹ Unlike Monsignor Ketcham during World War I, Father Tennyly and the Bureau did not actively work to protect the welfare of the Indians in the military. Instead, Tennyly directed his concern toward the war's effect on the Catholic missionary effort. In 1943, he stated that the war "has not crippled the Indian missions, [but] it has seriously affected them." The following year, he ruefully admitted that rising costs, wartime restrictions on supplies and the Native exodus from the reservations stalled Catholic advancement. But he believed that, once the war ended, Indian employees would probably lose their jobs, and they would return to their reservations. There they would find their missionaries waiting. "In the meantime," Tennyly wrote, the missionaries were "faithfully ministering to the spiritual and temporal needs of their people on eighty reservations."¹²

In 1946, Tennyly expressed some definite views about the war's overall effect and how the BCIM should respond. Despite the growing Native migration from the reservations, Tennyly noted that Catholic missionary work was "of course restricted to the reservation Indians, for there is scarcely a city where Indian people are numerous enough to need a special church." As far as Native soldiers and war-workers were concerned, Tennyly believed that most:

were not greatly benefited, it seems, by their experiences in the white man's world. Some even neglected to get their children into schools in the cities. It is probably best for most of them that they are back on the reservations. As far as their religious needs [were] concerned, the priests will be far more able to look after them there than when they were practically almost lost sight of in the big overcrowded cities, full of newcomers from everywhere.¹³

Tennyly's view, however, seemed to be wishful thinking. The war years marked a turning point for Native Americans. For many, the reservation, with its poverty, discrimination and excessive regulations, was too confining. Those who had tasted a modicum of liberation in the military or who enjoyed a measure of economic reward in defense work were more amenable to living in mainstream American society.¹⁴ Consequently, the drain off the reservation continued and, indeed, expanded.

Tennyly was not blind to the Indians' plight on the reservation. He genuinely cared for their well-being and raised a voice of protest at any perceived injustice. For example, Father Tennyly attended the Fort Berthold Indian Congress in August 1951. He thoroughly enjoyed the experience and found the Indians there to be devout Catholics, but he noted there was a "gathering cloud" in the area. The Garrison Dam Reservoir was going to flood a seventy-mile stretch of a reservation valley along the Missouri River, forcing the Indians living in the area to move off their best land. Although the Natives were paid for the land and given the means to relocate, Tennyly thought the Indians "unfortunately [had] to pay a heavy price for this benefit to their white fellow citizens." On another occasion, the director lamented the economic straits under which most Indians suffered. He noted that the Indian reservations were located "in the least favored parts of

¹¹Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:1005-1009; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 107-115.

¹²Tennyly, "The Indian Missions, 1943," *TIS* 23 (February 1943), 19-21; idem., "The Indian Missions-1944," *TIS* 24 (February 1944), 19-20.

¹³Tennyly, "The Indian Missions-1946," *TIS* 26 (March 1946), 38-39.

¹⁴Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:1009; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 114-15; Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 3-20.

this country." The poor land and insufficient rainfall, Tennyly asserted, greatly impeded any hopes of economic improvement and proved the old saying: "Poor land means poor people."¹⁵

Thus, Tennyly understood why Indians were leaving the reservations, but he had qualms about the trend. He acknowledged that many Indians benefited by moving to the city, but "such a step [was] not of advantage to others either from a material or a religious point of view, and their local missionary will so advise them." What Tennyly feared most was that Native Catholics who moved to the city would not practice their faith. But he recognized that the drift would continue; therefore, Catholic mission schools would continue their efforts to prepare Indian children to fit into the white community "successfully and with no detriment to their spiritual welfare." Tennyly thought the schools were absolutely vital for the Indians' well-being because the "resources of some reservations [were] so limited that even a better educated and better trained new generation will find the making of a livelihood there as difficult as their parents have found it to be." That is why the Catholic missions and schools would try "to help those who wish to go to make the best of the move."¹⁶

Clearly, Tennyly believed the mission schools were the key to "improving" the Indians. Consequently, the BCIM focused the bulk of its energy on maintaining those schools. Tennyly experienced a great deal of success lobbying Congress for increased appropriations. A number of reasons accounted for this. Firstly, most politicians believed, as Tennyly did, that education was the most effective means to achieve the government's ultimate goal--assimilation of Native Americans into white society. Secondly, government finances were no longer constrained by the Great Depression or the war effort. Lastly, Tennyly maintained cordial relations with the Indian Office. As a result, federal funding for Catholic schools ballooned. In 1948, Congress authorized \$191,637 to aid children attending Catholic day and boarding schools. The following year, that figure jumped to \$231,650, and in 1952, the total increased to \$289,495.¹⁷

Tennyly's success renewed fears that it might spark a Protestant backlash. In October 1951, Harry J. Sievers, S.J., of West Baden College, contacted Tennyly, asking for permission to examine Bureau records. Sievers was working on a biography of President Benjamin Harrison, and he needed information on Father Stephan and the contract school controversy of the late nineteenth century. Tennyly responded that the topic was indeed important to Sievers' study, but the director felt it was a subject "which should be handled very circumspectly." The reason for this caution, he reasoned, was that Catholic schools were currently receiving public funding. Although the general public was unaware of that fact, members of the National Council of the Churches of Christ were cognizant of the situation and called for an end to the "un-American practice of these subsidies." Tennyly regarded the "avoidance of a debate on this subject in Congress or before the public as much more important than the publication of forgotten points in past history which might serve to enkindle non-Catholic interest in the subject at the present time and precipitate a fresh war, the outcome of which can not be foreseen." Father Stephan's struggle, Tennyly stated, proved to be disastrous for the BCIM, and the Bureau has recovered some of the lost ground "only by infinite effort and by the avoidance of publicity." Tennyly concluded that, in his mind, "historical studies

¹⁵Tennyly, "Shadow Over Fort Berthold," *TIS* 31 (September 1951), 85-86; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 130-31; Tennyly, "The Indian Missions, 1952," *TIS* 32 (January 1952), 3-4.

¹⁶Tennyly, "The Indian Missions, 1951," *TIS* 31 (January-February 1951), 5.

¹⁷Tennyly to Cardinal Spellman, November 3, 1948, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 286, folder 19; Tennyly to Spellman, November 3, 1949, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 289, folder 20; Tennyly to Archbishop Francis Keough, November 5, 1952, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 298, folder 13.

are one thing, but the present interests of our Indian mission work are another and much more important one, and that the two are not necessarily compatible in the stormy atmosphere of present public opinion."¹⁸ Tennyly's discouragement of Sievers' work was surprising, given the former's academic background, but it indicated how strongly he felt about protecting and furthering Catholic missionary work.

Further evidence of Tennyly's single-mindedness can be seen in his reaction to the government's "termination" policy. In the post-war period, the government stepped up its drive to assimilate Indians into American society. The executive branch, Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs took steps to terminate the Indians' unique relationship with the federal government, thereby placing them on an equal footing with American citizens. Policy makers hoped to accomplish that goal by transferring several Indian Office functions to other agencies, to the states or to the tribes themselves. Moreover, the government decided to sever completely its connection with the most acculturated tribes.¹⁹ Tennyly adopted a distinctly apolitical stance with regard to the strategy. He informed Archbishop John O'Hara that "it might be detrimental to the work of the Bureau for me to undertake to appear before Congressional committees for or against these measures or to take a middle position." There will always be adjustments in putting Indian policy into effect, he asserted. His main business, Tennyly claimed, was "to induce officials, as far as possible, to make these adjustments in such a manner that our religious and educational work may be best served. I think that good will towards that is being maintained." In 1956, historian Angie Debo pointedly asked Tennyly for his opinion of the termination policy, and the director replied that the BCIM had not issued an official statement regarding the Indians' situation, but "we have tried to show our deep interest in Indians in other ways, as you know."²⁰ The policy proved to be disastrous for Native Americans. The tribes targeted for "termination" were in no way ready to compete on equal terms with white Americans. Even those tribes not affected by the policy lived in fear that the government might also force them to accept termination.²¹ Despite Native protests, Father Tennyly did not step beyond his proscribed bounds for BCIM involvement.

Perhaps that was so because Tennyly and most policy makers shared widely-held opinions of Native Americans and their culture. According to the white, paternalistic mindset, Indians who embraced the trappings of white society were "industrious, progressive, [and] well educated." But Natives that clung to their traditional lifestyle were "listless individuals, backward, slovenly, improvident, demoralized, and impoverished due more or less to their own fault." A large obstacle to their "elevation" was the "rather low" moral level among most tribes. Tennyly dismissed traditional Native religions as "largely a combination of animism and magic. Hence almost *totaliter aliter* than the true religion. Hence, not much to start from; a thicket of brushwood to be cleared

¹⁸Harry J. Sievers to Tennyly, October 9, 1951, and Tennyly to Sievers, October 10, 1951, both found in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 295, folder 21.

¹⁹Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:1013-1016, 1023-1036, 1041-1049; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 124-39. For a detailed account of the termination policy, see Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*.

²⁰Archbishop John O'Hara to Tennyly, April 5, 1954, and Tennyly to O'Hara, April 13, 1954, both found in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 304, folder 12; Angie Debo to Tennyly, January 23, 1956, and Tennyly to Debo, January 30, 1956, both found in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 309, folder 2.

²¹Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:1049-1056, 1097-1100; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 139-41.

away."²² It was that attitude, rooted in the past, that colored Tenny's perception of the resurgent Indian rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Tenny was aware of the changes sweeping across the reservations, but he viewed those changes within a "traditional" missionary context. In 1962, Tenny noted the several forces--schools, military service, automobiles and radios--which had "broken down the barriers to the outside world." Those forces, Tenny related, encouraged many Indians to improve their situations in the city, but also allowed "distracting and demoralizing influences" to infiltrate the Native community. To counter these influences, Tenny exhorted the missionaries to promote "wholesome recreational and social activities." He noted that some priests initiated Boy and Girl Scout troops, CYO clubs, adult study groups and Alcoholics Anonymous chapters among the Indians.²³

Native Americans, however, expected more. Beginning in the 1960s, they demanded an expanded role in their own affairs. The Indians' drive for self-determination coincided with other minority groups' push for increased awareness. As a result, government officials disbanded the termination policy and worked to include increasing numbers of Native Americans in the implementation of government programs. The progress made during this time, however, did not satisfy the more militant elements who angrily pointed to the substandard schools, poverty, unemployment, alcoholism and poor health conditions that plagued the Native community. Led by the American Indian Movement (AIM), they utilized more forceful means to push the Indians' plight into the national spotlight. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, embittered Natives staged protest marches and occupied Alcatraz Island as well as the Bureau of Indian Affairs building and Wounded Knee.²⁴

A number of Catholic missionaries supported the Indian Rights Movement, but Tenny seemed ambivalent. At the 1973 Tekakwitha Conference, Catholic workers devoted a good deal of time to a discussion of AIM and the Indian Rights Movement. Although most of those who attended questioned AIM's tactics, they clearly favored the group's goals. They asserted that AIM "articulated deep feelings and frustrations which have lain dormant for years and... alerted the white world to these frustrations." The Conference forwarded a report to Father Tenny in Washington. His terse reply was revealing. He acknowledged receipt of the report but offered no opinion with regard to the Conference's actions.²⁵ Perhaps Tenny felt the "Red Power" movement was pushing its agenda too far, too fast and threatened to undermine the work done by the BCIM.

Similarly, he believed that some Catholic groups went too far in their advocacy of Indian rights. For example, a group of priests, brothers and sisters ministering to the Indians on the Cheyenne and Standing Rock Reservations organized the Kateri Conference in 1974 to work more closely with the Indian community. At the October 20 meeting, Conference members adopted a resolution that chastised the government and other "impersonal agencies" for treatment which has made the Indians "psychologically helpless as a people and a nation and caused a deterioration of their humanness, resulting in much confusion and frustration." Moreover, the members criticized the "Christian approach" which had "so frequently been lacking in understanding, appreciation and

²²Tenny to Rev. John Gilligan, September 18, 1959, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 316, folder 16. See also, Doris Baldwin to Tenny, May 25, 1962, and June 14, 1962; Tenny to Baldwin, May 31, 1962, June 6, 1962, and June 18, 1962, all located in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 323, folder 6.

²³Tenny, "The Indian Missions, 1962," *TIS* 40 (Spring 1962), 4-5.

²⁴Prucha, *The Great Father*, 2:1087-1138; Parman, *Indians and the American West*, 149-68.

²⁵Report on Tekakwitha Conference, August 6-8, 1973, BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 345, folder 9.

awareness of the Indian Situation; most often charity was tendered rather than justice pursued." Rather than establishing a Native ministry, "impersonal agencies of the Church" sent missionaries to serve the Indians. The Conference recommended that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops take steps to create an Office of Bishop for the Indian People of the United States. Father Pius Mardian, Chairman of the Kateri Conference, relayed a copy of the group's annual report to Father Tennelly and asked if he might donate some operating funds. The director replied that he read the report carefully, but he did not think it appropriate to "make any comments on it, except to say that you are all entitled to your opinions on Indian problems and those of workers among the Indians in your area." He informed Father Mardian that it was often profitable to discuss differing views and experiences, but Tennelly did not think it wise for the BCIM to contribute any funds to the Kateri Conference because it "would seem to be an endorsement of their views and actions, to which I do not think I should commit the Bureau."²⁶

Clearly, over the past forty years as BCIM director, Father Tennelly held firm to the conviction that the Indians could be saved only by abandoning their traditional lifestyle. He certainly did not sanction the revival of Indian religions. His last report on the condition of Indian missions differed very little from his first. In his 1976 summary, Tennelly complained that Indians were "not easily influenced to embrace the faith." The priests working on the reservations were also troubled by "Indians who want to revive old beliefs and practices."²⁷ Though he was not in step with modern cultural pluralism, Father Tennelly sincerely cared about the Indians' welfare. He was true to his religious calling, believing that Native Americans could achieve everlasting salvation only by embracing the Catholic faith. Moreover, he worked tirelessly to maintain Catholic schools, as he considered education the most effective means to prepare Indians for a rapidly changing world.

By 1975, Tennelly was ready to step down as director. His zeal for the Catholic mission cause had not diminished, but his advancing age and declining health dictated a change. In July 1975, he contacted John Cardinal Krol about finding a possible successor.²⁸ That task proved to be problematic. A suitable replacement was not found until the Board of Directors appointed Monsignor Paul Lenz director on July 5, 1976. Relieved of the director's burden, Father Tennelly retired to the peace and solitude of St. Charles Villa. His health deteriorated to the point where he transferred to St. Martin Home. At the age of ninety-one, he passed away on, appropriately, Mission Sunday, October 18, 1981. The funeral mass was held on October 20 in St. Martin's Chapel in Catonsville, and he was buried in the nearby Sulpician Cemetery. Tennelly's successor, Monsignor Lenz, wrote that there would be no doubt of Tennelly's "cherished place in the annals of American Catholic and secular history. He was a holy man, an inspiration—a true missionary."²⁹ But perhaps Father Robert Paul Mohan, who delivered the eulogy at the funeral Mass, best summed up Father Tennelly's career:

²⁶Father Pius Mardian to Tennelly, May 5, 1975; Tennelly to Mardian, May 8, 1975, both located in BCIM, Series 1-1, Box 348, folder 9.

²⁷*Our Negro and Indian Missions, 1976*, BCIM, Series 7/1, Box 4, folder 7.

²⁸Tennelly to John Cardinal Krol, July 3, 1975, Sulpician Archives, Baltimore, Record Group 12, Box 6.

²⁹William J. Lee, S.S., to "Dear Sulpician Confrere," October 19, 1981; *BCIM Newsletter* (January 1978), BCIM, Series 4/1, Box 14, folder 27; *BCIM Newsletter* (November 1981), BCIM, Series 4/1, Box 14, folder 28.

The greater part of Father Tenny's apostolate was served in an older tradition, yet he accepted change with grace, if not enthusiasm. Yesterday's world was perhaps in many ways a simpler world, and his style was primarily adapted to that world. But even the critics of our own time have been known in a later vision of earlier years, to see fidelity and firmness where once they tended to see severity and intransigence.³⁰

³⁰"Eulogy for the Reverend John B. Tenny, S.S., Delivered October 20, 1981 by the Reverend Robert Paul Mohan," Sulpician Archives, Baltimore, Record Group 42, Box 7.